



## OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich  
*County Executive*

Tiffany Ward  
*Director*

### MEMORANDUM

April 29, 2022

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director  
Office of Management and Budget

cc: Gabe Albornoz, President  
County Council

From: Tiffany Ward, Director  
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #22-76  
ARPA Transitional Supplemental Instruction Grant

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation (SA)#22-76 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Transitional Supplemental Instruction Grant is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in the County as it provides targeted resources to help address inequities in education facing Emerging Multilingual Learners (EMLs). ORESJ also notes the importance of addressing long-standing (poverty and structural racism) and pandemic-specific (digital connectivity, additional stressors, and household responsibilities) education inequities to ensure EMLs and their families can navigate and succeed during the pandemic recovery.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #22-76 is to utilize funding from the ARPA under the Transitional Supplemental Instruction Grant to hire 29 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers across K-12 to support Emerging Multilingual Learners (EML). The goal of the funding is to address instructional and language needs of EMLs; a population of students impacted by pandemic related disruptions. Available information explains that during virtual instruction in the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, the attendance rates of EMLS varied as some students left school to join the workforce or were otherwise disengaged from the virtual environment.

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To assess the extent to which SA#22-76 advances racial equity and social justice in the County, ORESJ looked at the experiences of EMLs during the pandemic, the structural inequities characterizing their experience, and whether the targeted resources funded under this Supplemental Appropriation are likely to address those inequities and their impacts on learning.

The experiences of EMLs described in SA#22-76 are not unlike the challenges EMLs across the Country faced during the pandemic. Lack of access to technology or a reliable internet connection impacted students' ability to get and stay connected to the virtual learning environment<sup>1</sup>. Even in districts where technology hardware was distributed to students, barriers to internet connectivity<sup>2</sup> created learning disruptions. In addition, the practicalities of delivering specific strategies designed for EMLs was complicated and often difficult to adapt in large online classrooms, as there's no research base for serving EML students via distance learning during a pandemic<sup>3</sup>. These challenges impacted teachers as well and their ability to discern the reasons for the emergence of learning gaps. For example, ESOL teachers needed new or different skills to determine whether students are falling behind because of instructional materials or because of Covid-19 issues stressing the household<sup>4</sup>. As a result, the combination of technology, internet, and instructional barriers often resulted in a learning context not suited for the specific needs of EML students.

Research also highlighted the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on households of color, particularly low-income families with essential workers and how those impacts affected EMLs. In addition to the well-documented health and economic impacts of the pandemic, EMLs may be the only English-speaker at home and as a result may be responsible for speaking to landlords or filling out unemployment forms for family members<sup>5</sup>. In some cases, EMLs took on additional work or childcare<sup>6</sup> to help their families cope with unemployment or unstable jobs with inflexible schedules and few benefits. In addition, EMLs are more likely to be children of color, growing up in families experiencing poverty, and live in families with relatives or parents who are immigrants<sup>7</sup>. The combination of additional responsibilities during the pandemic and stressors related to poverty and structural racism create serious

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<sup>1</sup> Education Development Center. "How Is the Pandemic Affecting English Learners?." June 2020. Available at: <https://www.edc.org/how-pandemic-affecting-english-learners>

<sup>2</sup> University of Cincinnati Online. "Covid Creates Academic Gap for English Language Learners." <https://online.uc.edu/covid-creates-academic-gap-for-english-language-learners/#:~:text=During%20the%20Covid%20pandemic%2C%20we,their%20abilities%20to%20learn%20effectively.>

<sup>3</sup> Conor P. Williams and Dr. Maggie Marcus. The Century Foundation. "Pandemic Response to Pandemic Recovery: Helping English Learners Succeed This Fall and Beyond." August 11, 2021. Available at: <https://tcf.org/content/report/pandemic-response-pandemic-recovery-helping-english-learners-succeed-fall-beyond/?session=1>

<sup>4</sup> University of Cincinnati Online.

<sup>5</sup> University of Cincinnati Online

<sup>6</sup> Conor P. Williams and Dr. Maggie Marcus.

<sup>7</sup> Conor P. Williams and Dr. Maggie Marcus.

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burdens for EMLs as they navigate the online educational environment and transition to in-person learning. Together with the technology and instructional barriers described above, it is not surprising that attendance during the pandemic was lower than at pre-pandemic levels.

The experiences of EMLs and impacts on learning and well-being are difficult to measure<sup>8</sup>, but research suggests that in many ways the pandemic exacerbate[ed] existing inequities in academic achievement<sup>9</sup> as it replicated and exacerbated harmful patterns that were already well established in many US schools<sup>10</sup>. The Century Foundation compiled a series of recommendations for how teachers and administrators should prioritize targeted resources (from federal recovery efforts) to address long-standing and pandemic-specific inequities during the transition to in-person learning<sup>11</sup>:

- Schools should authentically reengage EML families in linguistically and culturally competent ways;
- Schools should treat EMLs in a holistic manner, recognizing that their linguistic development is inseparable from their academic development and their social-emotional well-being; and
- Schools should—at the earliest possible moment—gather data on EML’s linguistic and academic development so they can target in-school pandemic recovery efforts to meet these students where they are.

While Supplemental Appropriation #22-76 does not specifically address these overarching recommendations, the addition of ESOL teachers to bolster instructional capacity provides an opportunity to incorporate some of these practices into existing academic interventions. The effectiveness of additional instructional capacity will be impacted by the existence of policies and structures to support teachers and families; collect and monitor data; and continue to address the disproportionate economic and health impacts of the pandemic throughout the recovery.

cc: Ken Hartman, Director, Office of Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive  
Monifa McKnight, Superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools

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<sup>8</sup> Ileana Najarro. Education Week. “The Complicated Picture of English-Language Learners’ Progress During the Pandemic.” November 2, 2021. Available at: <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/the-complicated-picture-of-english-language-learners-progress-during-the-pandemic/2021/11>

<sup>9</sup> Education Development Center.

<sup>10</sup> Conor P. Williams and Dr. Maggie Marcus.

<sup>11</sup> The following list is adapted directly from “Pandemic Response to Pandemic Recovery: Helping English Learners Succeed This Fall and Beyond.” The authors use the term English Learner (EL); we have replaced this term with the term used in Montgomery County, which is Emerging Multilingual Learner (EML)